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Messages of the First Presidency James R. Clark, ed.

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Book Reviews

JAMES R. CLARK, ed. *Messages of the First Presidency, I*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1965. Pp. xxv-415. \$4.50.

In compiling the *Messages of the First Presidency*, Professor Clark is seeking to perform a vital and helpful work. To Latter-day Saints, the official pronouncements of the First Presidency are of utmost importance particularly those from the formative period of the Church. Professor Clark commences this volume with a Preface and an Introduction, after which he compiles in chronological order those available statements, letters, discourses, etc. which he considers as official pronouncements. The first 231 pages concern the administration of Joseph Smith, while the remaining 132 pages contain the administration of Brigham Young between July, 1844 and October, 1849. Until December, 1847, Brigham was acting in the capacity of President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. While the Index is fairly adequate, it omits some items. (For example, the editorial on "The Gift of the Holy Ghost," pages 143-149, is not listed under Holy Ghost.) There is no Table of Contents. Evidently Professor Clark feels that the chronological listing of documents, with the Index he personally prepared, is sufficient to give the reader the necessary assistance in finding specific items within the volume.

As an aid to the reader, Professor Clark has also written introductions to some of the items included in his compilation. In his introduction to "The Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," etc., he assigns the authorships to Wilford Woodruff, citing an article by William H. Reeder, Jr. as his authority. But while Dr. Reeder commences his article with the statement that Wilford Woodruff was instructed to write this Proclamation, he gives no proof whatever to support his assertion. B.H. Roberts assigns the authorship of this Proclamation to Parley P. Pratt, indicating that it was published by Wilford Woodruff. (See *History of the Church*, VII, 558.) A study of the literary style of the document in question, with other facts that have a bearing on the subject, supports the statement by Roberts. Obviously, Dr. Reeder mistook the publisher for the author.

While Professor Clark's own efforts in making this compilation commenced at an earlier time, he and sixteen LDS educators worked together on the project as part of a course assignment at Brigham Young University during the summer of 1960. Later, he obtained a research grant to continue his efforts; and with the cooperation of the Church Historian's Office, he indicates that the collection of Messages was expanded until it is believed that "the collection is substantially complete for the period from the establishment of the First Presidency in 1833 A.D. to date." Nevertheless, he states that "final completeness is not claimed because of human limitations." The materials in volume one, however, with the exception of three items are taken exclusively from the *History of the Church*; and in the opinion of this writer, two of these items cannot appropriately be classified as Messages. One is a personal letter by the Prophet to his wife Emma; and the other is a poem in which Joseph Smith placed section 76 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* in verse. Neither of these items was considered by Joseph Smith as an official declaration.

The work of gathering the official pronouncements of the First Presidency during the administration of Joseph Smith apparently has been approached by Professor Clark with a view, first, to compile all known statements that bear the signatures of all members of the First Presidency. Here his work conforms to his stated intent. (There are some statements that bear the signatures of Joseph Smith and one other member of the Presidency that are not included.) In addition, he has selected at his own discretion other representative statements, letters, discourses, etc. of Joseph Smith which he considers to be authoritative, in an effort to reflect the role of the Prophet as the presiding officer in the Church during this early period. This means that his compilation is not a complete collection of all authoritative statements of Joseph Smith, as President and Prophet of the Church. For example, Professor Clark states that this compilation began some years ago with his own file which he labeled "Revelations Not in the Standard Works of the L.D.S. Church." Yet there are several revelations to Joseph Smith that are not in the Standard Works which he does not include in his compilation. To illustrate, there are revelations to the Prophet concerning certain individuals within the Church, including Reynolds Cahoon, Frederick G. Williams, Isaac Morley, Edward Partridge, Warren Parrish, Harvey Whit-

lock and Brigham Young. (See *ibid.*, II, 299, 300, 302-303, 311, 315-316; III, 23.) Of a different nature, there is also a revelation concerning the Twelve and another on the status of those who die in ignorance of the Gospel, but who would have received it had they heard it in mortality. (See *ibid.*, II, 300-301, 380.)

In other ways, Professor Clark has been selective. The First Presidency was not officially organized until March, 1833; and prior to that time, Joseph Smith made certain official pronouncements. But while Professor Clark includes the Prophet's letter to N.E. Seaton, an editor at Rochester, New York, he omits such declarations as Joseph Smith made in the Conference held October 25, 1831, and the official statement he published in *The Evening and The Morning Star*, I (August, 1832), 22, entitled "The Honorable Men of the World."

Again, some letters written by the Prophet are considered by Professor Clark to be official declarations and are therefore included in his compilation. These include certain letters written to individuals. But other letters by the Prophet which this writer feels are equally important in the development of the Church are not included. Among the latter is a letter written by Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, November 27, 1832, and a letter by Joseph Smith and Elias Higbee to Hyrum Smith and the High Council of the Church at Nauvoo, written from Washington, D.C., December 5, 1839. Part of the letter to Phelps has been excerpted and placed in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. However, the remaining portion fits logically into the category of material compiled in this volume; and it would not have been inappropriate to have reproduced the full letter. The Prophet's letter from Washington is of vital importance and was directed to an official body within the Church, instructing them on pertinent issues that then faced the Church. Other letters by Joseph Smith that are not included in this compilation are some of a political nature, written to John C. Calhoun and Henry Clay. The Prophet never considered his mission as being limited to the religious sphere of life. He also spoke officially on current political issues; and George Q. Cannon, for one, looked upon these declarations as official statements to men who were leading the political destiny of the country. Joseph Smith's letter to Calhoun, in particular, is a classic document in American political thought and is of the

utmost importance in seeing the relationship the Saints then had with the nation and its leading figures.

In the area of political affairs, Professor Clark is also selective in that he includes Joseph Smith's "Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States," as the Prophet's declaration to the nation on political economy, written for use in his campaign for the Presidency of the United States in 1844. But he does not include President Smith's "Appeal to his Native State—Vermont," which is also an important statement in the area of pronouncements to the citizens of the country.

Finally, Professor Clark includes in his compilation certain discourses, declarations, etc. made by the Prophet on a variety of subjects. Here again he is selective in that which he includes in his compilation. For example, he reproduces an editorial written by the Prophet on "The Gift of the Holy Ghost," but omits another editorial of equal importance on a similar subject area, entitled "Try the Spirits." (See *ibid.*, IV, 571-581.) The later editorial is of particular importance in light of some problems the Church had had with spurious revelations from unauthorized individuals. Again, on April 8, 1844, Joseph Smith declared in an official statement to the Church that he had "received instructions from the Lord" that the whole of America is Zion, and that the Saints could thus build up Stakes of Zion in all areas of the land. This meant that they did not have to remain in the area of Missouri and Illinois to build up Zion, but could go elsewhere and find a haven from the oppression that was being heaped upon them. Upon the basis of this declaration, the Saints made their great exodus to the West. But while Brigham Young termed the Prophet's declaration "a perfect sweepstakes" and "a perfect knock-down to the devil's kingdom," Professor Clark does not include it in his compilation.

Professor Clark has been faced with a problem of what to include in his compilation. In this volume of his work, he has chosen to include all known statements bearing the signatures of the First Presidency, and in addition to supplement these statements with miscellaneous materials of a representative nature, to illustrate the role Joseph Smith played in developing the Church and its doctrines. While this approach will not be necessary in the future volumes of his work, some will agree that under the circumstances it is appropriate in this in-

itial publication. Others, however, will argue that this formative period is of such importance that a compilation of this kind should include all authoritative statements by the Prophet. Whichever view one takes, Professor Clark is to be commended for the contribution he has made in initiating a work of this kind. If, after he has published the remaining volumes, he sees the need for a different approach to be taken on this early formative period, a future edition could be more inclusive in its scope.

Hyrum L. Andrus